

Reader, He Imprisoned Them: The Double Entrapment within Jane Eyre

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter I: The Economic and Social Limitation of Jane Eyre	3
Chapter II: The Erasure of Bertha Mason	19
Conclusion	38
Works Cited	39
Images Cited	41

Introduction

When beginning this project, I was enamored by the representation of mad women within nineteenth century Gothic literature. My interest solely began with the intense and exaggerated depiction of Bertha Mason. I soon realized however, that the social implications of Britain during this time truly effected the mode of the Gothic novel. The classic element of the mad woman trapped away somewhere with the patriarchal male figure seemed to me like the authors' anxieties of the society's treatment towards them. When I began to study and look deeper, I realized that this was not the only thing that impacted the novel. The mode of narration is essential to how we read the novel *Jane Eyre*. The beginning pages draw the reader in with its diary-like tone. It is almost as if Brontë is speaking directly to us, even though it is the narrator. The narration of *Jane Eyre* and the exclusion of Bertha's voice created an interesting (and demeaning) contrast. When beginning my research, I stumbled upon the well-known feminist work *The Madwoman in the Attic* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. Although they had many interesting thoughts on the novel and how it functioned as an act of rebellion and viewing Bertha as Jane's "dark double," I believe they were missing some key factors. Some of what they were missing has been fleshed out through years of academic focus on Bertha as a character of her own who is excluded from the novel and the narrative in significant ways and is sacrificed for the marriage plot. Many scholars who have worked on the place of Bertha in *Jane Eyre* include Elizabeth Donaldson, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Alexandra Nygren. They have all examined the ways in which Bertha is trapped in the novel. The argument I am making within my paper is that both Jane and Bertha are entrapped within the Gothic themes of Victorian literature. This argument is split into two chapters. The first chapter discusses Jane's particular and unfamiliar entrapment. I argue that Jane is trapped within the economic and social makings

of the patriarchy which are assimilated to the Gothic narrative of entrapment. In the second chapter I construct an argument regarding Bertha's experiences of entrapment. These two entrapments are distinctly different and are divided into a wide variety of physical, emotional, and narratological entrapments that are consequences of not only the patriarchy but of imperialism as well. Since Jane is the narrator, the narrative clearly works in her favor, although the plot does not. What I mean by this is that while the narrative of the marriage plot is successful the entrapment of Jane within the marriage subjugates her to a life of caretaking. This is due to the dovetailing of the social implications of marriage and the Gothic trope of entrapment which work together to create both a happy ending in terms of the marriage plot and a curtailment of Jane's resistant energy via the successful completion of the marriage plot. As far as Bertha is concerned, her silencing and lack of any narrative voice is a result of the historically imperialist British consciousness that permeates the novel. In addition to the silencing that emerges from the context of British imperialism, I find that the depictions of madwomen within art and psychology present major problematic perceptions of women. In my Senior Project, I will be using a wide variety of disability studies, psychological, art historical and colonial studies to imagine these forms of entrapment as a direct result of British society. Although Jane and Bertha face very different forces of entrapment within the narrative mode and society, the connection within the novel is undeniable. Finally, I argue that the result of Rochester's injury at the end of a novel is a feminist revenge in which the patriarchal figure is diminished within the text.

Chapter I

The Economic and Social Limitation of Jane Eyre

One of the things that makes Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* so unique is her intersection of fiction and the emulation of nineteenth century life and ideas within a fictional frame. Brontë labels *Jane Eyre* as "an autobiography." The clear connection between Jane and Brontë is the position of governess. Therefore, much of my argument will surround this idea that Brontë's life heavily influenced the novel.

Jane presents many of the struggles of governesses during the nineteenth century that Brontë also suffered. As I follow the story of the title character, I will examine the separation of Jane the character from Jane the narrator and how this influences the narrative mode of the novel. I will later use this distinction to demonstrate the connection between Jane the narrator and Brontë, the author. To begin, I believe it essential to start with a quotation that examines the distinction between narrator Jane and character Jane and see the effect of this separation on the reader's experience. I would also like to mention the effect of the sentence and formal structure and how that has impacted the act of reading. Finally, I will discuss the variety of the Gothic trope of entrapment as well as nature.

Jane Eyre, who had been an ardent, expectant woman-- almost a bride-- was a cold, solitary girl again: her life was pale; her prospects were desolate. A Christmas frost had come at midsummer; a white December storm had whirled over June; ice glazed the ripe apples, drifts crushed the blowing roses; on a hay-field and corn-field lay frozen shroud: lanes which last night blushed full of flowers, today were pathless and untrodden snow; and the woods, which twelve hours since waved leafy and fragrant as groves between the tropics, now spread, waste, wild, and white as pine-forests in wintry Norway. My hopes were all dead (74)

In this excerpt, there are two main points that grab my interest. The first is the narrative shift, from “Jane Eyre” at the start of the passage to the “my” at the end of the passage. In the passage prior to this one, Jane Eyre was speaking to herself about her situation and this is what she said: “I was in my own room as usual” (73). The reader immediately understands the difference between narrator Jane speaking in third person and the character Jane speaking in the first person. While addressing herself in the third person, her illeism brings attention to herself. This is interesting because its jarring quality of the “I” brings more attention to the character and less to the narrator. This strong juxtaposition helps the reader to thoroughly understand the difference between characters Jane’s thoughts and the narrator's observation of her being. This intense transition within the passage is possible because the narrator and the subject of narration are both the same, the novel’s full title being *Jane Eyre, An Autobiography*.

Now this shift is not so much a shift of narration but of perspective; there is a shift from an objective perspective to a subjective perspective. The text is entirely manipulated by narrator Jane, and although she can never be entirely objective, she makes an attempt to remain objective partly via the illeism and partly via the nature description. Finally, Brontë has ownership of the narrative, therefore her manipulation of narrating Jane is crucial. The effect of narrating Jane’s emotion through the use of objectifying language is infused through the tropes of winter weather. By delving into and correcting exactly how disappointed and saddened Jane is via the third person helps the reader to understand how impactful the situation is. It is much more impactful for the reader to see the environment shift along with Jane’s mood instead of having the narrative go into a long monologue of how dreary her existence is. This shift further proves that this text is not just about Jane but is by Jane where Jane, the narrator, tells of Jane, the character, all the while knowing and discovering the character – whom she already knows – as the novel develops.

Aside from the narration, we also see the sentence structure of triplets which is similar to Austen's style of writing. The first triplet of phrases "ardent," "expectant woman" and "almost a bride," is essential to breaking down the character and presenting the transitions in Jane's mind. The triplet of phrases moves from a positive view, 'ardent' meaning very excited to "almost a bride" which is a state of partial happiness. The first word makes it clear that character Jane was looking forward to the marriage. Then the language becomes more neutral, 'expectant'; this is very simple and straightforward. Character Jane is now awaiting the marriage. Describing Jane in these two terms allows the reader to determine the state of mind she was in before she had become as the rest of the paragraph describes. This then allows narrator Jane to create sympathy from the readers for character Jane. The last of the phrases is most interesting: 'almost a bride.' This is not describing her emotion in any way but the state of her being and the reason she is disappointed. This section of the passage is much colder and removed than the others. Another triplet ensues with a similar pattern, 'cold, solitary girl' describing her effectively and her state of mind and being, as the first triplet did stating that she was 'ardent' and 'expectant.' Then, as in the last passage, we move outward again with the phrase, 'her life was pale.' This describes her surroundings and not just her wellbeing. Finally, we get the phrase; "her prospects were desolate," which completely encapsulates her desolation; as well as 'almost a bride is paralleled; portraying an outward motion of the triplet. In each case the triplet begins with something very descriptive and full of emotion, the middle part of the triplet then describes something related to her at a bit more distance, and lastly describes at a large distance. This last statement seems to depict the truth detached from emotion. She was in fact almost a bride and because of this now her prospects are desolate. The first and second set of quotations also seem to have cause and effect tied into them. At first Jane was ardent and expectant and now she is cold and solitary.

Then she was as the second part of the triplet states, almost a bride and now the effect of this is that her life is pale, and her prospects are desolate. Both sets of triplets begin with the inner self and move outward to her 'prospects.' Similar to the other triplets in the novel, both can be used to expand further upon the mind. It is as if the narrator is beginning to gouge away at Jane's physical being, mental state and then social standing. To simply state that Jane was depressed about this news just simply would not do her emotional state justice and that is when Brontë articulates the physical environment to be just as impacted. These triplets take the reader through the process that the character goes through as well as the narrator. These acts of knowing and performing articulate for the reader the awareness both the narrator and character have of self-correction.

The second point I would like to make is about the landscape in the novel and how this makes the readers more sympathetic to Jane the character. In many Gothic novels, weather symbolizes the mood of the characters in the novel at any particular time. A strong example of this is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. When Frankenstein creates his creature, it is a dark and stormy night with lightning and thunder. This moment is extremely memorable because of the intense descriptive tone Shelley creates as well as the corresponding intimidating weather. Relating back to my earlier point of the importance of ownership of the text, this allows for the author to control the environment of the novel wholly. This excerpt is a strong example of this novelistic control, displaying a winter storm within the summer month of June. The words used to describe herself as 'cold,' 'solitary,' and 'pale' much like a winter storm that is now occurring. The narrator describes the snow and coldness as a 'Christmas frost' which may sound rather pleasant and that is why it is modified via the description of decaying of flowers, fruits, and trees. This symbolic evocation of the weather directly reflects Jane's mood and life which is like,

the beginning of June when things start to bloom and become anew. This blooming process was in direct correlation with Jane's life. She had fallen in love and was beginning a new life with a new man with many positive prospects in her future. However, as soon as she had found out about Bertha it was as if a winter storm killed all the hope she had. Any 'fruits' possibly, fruits of her loins, a common phrase that came from the Bible to describe someone's offspring were all dead. Jane's prospects had come to a complete halt. Jane states, "My hopes were all dead" and this directly translates the entire paragraph that figuratively describes her emotion. Near the end of the paragraph, we again see the common triplet referring to the cold weather. The words 'waste,' 'wild,' and 'white' all describe the weather to be as the "wintry forests of Norway." Unlike the other triplets this one exhibits a level of alliteration used to exacerbate the level of coldness. The winter seems to be a wild, white, waste as well as Jane's life. Jane similarly describes her life as pale; the weather takes on the same format. In contrast to this novel, Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* deals with the same contrast of nature and emotion. Instead of sadness the novel deals with its counterpart, the innate beauty and appreciation of nature. In this section of the novel where I locate a parallel of great emotion and nature, Julia finally escapes entrapment within the castle and is feeling a sense of freedom. She can finally enjoy the outdoors; "Julia accustomed herself to walk in the fine evenings under the shade of the high trees that environed the sky. The dewy coolness of the air refreshed her. The innumerable roseate tints which the parting sun-beams reflected on the rocks above. . . as nightshades fell, excited sensations of a sweet and tranquil nature" (125). Although a complete contrast the *Jane Eyre* passage this is a good example of this nature trope in Gothic literature. Even the structure of the sentence remains similar, beginning with the character's name and then moving through feeling as well as the physical environment. Nature provides a state almost of healing. Julia then seems

to feel the sensations of nature transported from the outdoors onto her as now she feels a sense of freedom. In contrast, Jane feels intense disappointment; she experiences the dying cold as it infects the beautiful apples and trees and things that carry and transfer life. This death by cold is exactly how Jane might feel. The fact that the storm is in June further develops the impact on her spirit as well. In the nineteenth century the cold brought many things along with it such a death and disease, travelling troubles, lack of food and warmth. The winter months were a lot more difficult for people then and this negative association is developed. For the Gothic novel especially snow and rain are often used as drivers for the plot. Often there is thunder or lightning when a part of the book is about to reveal something major or a plot twist is about to occur. In these two sections, however, weather is not as essential to plot as it is to the characters' emotion. For Jane, because this is *her* narrative, her moods control the weather. Since she is feeling cold, summer begins to turn into snow and an anomaly occurs. For Julia rather, the outdoors has a direct reflection of her mood. *A Sicilian Romance* has its own narrator and therefore although emotion and nature are connected, they are not controlled. In the case of *Jane Eyre*, the emotions of the character thoroughly saturate ostensibly objective descriptions of weather because of the symbiosis between character and narrator. Therefore, it is essential to note the impact the narrative has on the characters and how they are closely related.

As a result of the close reading above of narrator Jane and character Jane, I find that the novel and its narration, are heavily dependent on the relationship between the eponymous heroine and the narrator. In addition, I find that Brontë's perspective is also fully embedded within the novel. Many aspects of Brontë's life parallel with the novel. My source for this claim is *Charlotte Brontë's World of Death* by Robert Keefe. The first parallel he locates is, "Charlotte was five years old when her mother died" (4) and "Nor was Patrick Brontë a warm parent. The

available evidence indicates that the death of his wife turned him into a moody, silent recluse” (5). In the novel, however, both of Jane’s parents are dead. The connection of absent parents remains very close. Although in Brontë’s life her mother was dead and her father was very absent, the connection of these withdrawn parental figures relates to Jane. The one character who takes care of Jane as a child is Mrs. Reed who is punishing and withdrawn. Mrs. Reed connects to the ‘moody, silent recluse’ father because she is a similar authority figure. Later, Keefe states, “Three years after [Patrick’s] wife’s death, he thought he had found a solution to the problem when he heard of the Clergy Daughters’ school” (5). This reality for Brontë is similar to Jane. Jane had also been sent away to an all-girls school, named Lowood by this parental figure. While at school, Charlotte Brontë’s sisters became “dangerously ill” and “Maria Bronte died on May 6th” and “Elizabeth died on June 15th” (6). After that, the rest of the sisters were brought home. This is also a parallel to the death of Jane’s close friend Helen in the novel. These close relationships of death and rejection are themes within *Jane Eyre*. Therefore, although the novel is fiction it seems in many ways to be a fictional representation of Brontë’s life via the close relationship between her life and Jane. The connections between the author Brontë and the events within the novel are too close to keep disconnected. This is not the only relation between the character and Brontë, however. Another element of Brontë’s life that I want to focus on is writing. Brontë engages not just in novel writing, but in letter writing as well. This information contributes to our understanding of her perspective within the novel. According to Robert Keefe, “Her letters show that for the rest of her life she thought of herself as an onlooker of life, an outsider who would watch others give and receive affection, but who was not worthy of love herself”(4). This quotation embodies much of the sentiment of *Jane Eyre*. The tone of the novel

resembles one of an outsider, where narrator Jane tells the story of herself. The act of letter writing is essential to Brontë as well as governesses of the nineteenth century.

Although writing is essential to both the author and the narrator, the stature as a governess is also important. Governesses experience a great deal of alienation due to multiple oppressions such as economic, social, and physical discomfort. Economically, governesses were both dependent on another for their pay but independent from the household or familial money. Socially, governesses were alienated because they were women and could not participate in social gatherings in the same position and comfort as men but were also more socially active than mothers as they were not confined to the home. Physically their alienation derives from living in another's home where they were not family but also not maids. Their position in society as well as the household provides a liminal space, a space where they hold neither upper nor lower status. Governesses' physical limitation is symbolic of their social limitation; they do not mingle with the family they work for nor the maids. To examine these different types of exclusion a reader must place themselves wholly within the history of governess's lives and reveal the difference between the reality and the literary allegorization of their lives. Here, I will focus primarily on *Jane Eyre* and her experience as the character as well as the narrator and how that leads to her alienation as well as her entrapment due to socioeconomic standards.

The first point that comes to mind is the classification of the novel *Jane Eyre*, as not only a Gothic novel but a "governess novel," according to Nora Gilbert (456) engaging with the classic "marriage plot," according to Elise B. Michie (421). While the novel contains many Gothic tropes such as entrapment, the supernatural, madness and isolation, it is clear that the form of the governess novel is an extraordinarily important frame for reading this text. Gilbert explains this type of novel in which "the heroine is saved from the drudgery and intellectual

stagnation of her work life via the conduit of marriage,” thus, merging the marriage plot with the Gothic element of entrapment (Gilbert, 456). I argue that the “saving” that Gilbert refers to is, in effect, no saving because it exchanges one kind of servitude for another; the patriarchal entrapment of marriage is a substitute for the physical entrapment of the Governess within the estate. This level of entrapment within marriage exceeds other novels because it is not just the physical space or home that entraps the woman. The woman is trapped in a doubling-way; she is entrapped within a home and marriage. The economic dependency of marriage creates a new form of entrapment for *Jane Eyre*. This entrapment creates a divergence from the traditional marriage plot and takes form through Gothic elements. Further, according to Gilbert, in novels, governesses often fall in love with and are intimate with bachelors who hire them but in reality “as a general rule, the governess was looked upon as subordinate rather than as a prospective partner” (459). In *Jane Eyre* this “rule” is turned onto its head. This novel presents a factious idealistic version of reality where the bachelor *does* have romantic feelings for their governess. Furthermore, this juxtaposition creates a fine discrepancy between Jane the character and Jane the narrator. Within both reality and the text this ‘idealistic’ form of the bachelor and governess becoming romantically involved cannot be achieved. Jane the character has a clear opportunity to marry the man who hires her as his governess. She will, however, lose her opportunity due to the Gothic elemental structure superimposed on the governess novel. By this I mean that the Gothic element of entrapment is transfigured within the novel, instead of physical entrapment the novel gives us romantic and marriage entrapment that ensnares Jane the character. Jane the character is presented the opportunity of marriage which is scarce in the material world but because Bronte combines the marriage plot with the governess plot this becomes available. Due to the reinsertion of Gothic elements, however, Bertha is then revealed which destabilizes the marriage plot and

allows the governess plot to echo the realities of the material world in which governesses did not become the legal and respectable partners of the men who hired them. My point is that the critics I am engaging with point to the economic instability that exists for the middle-class governess and that these elements of the classic Gothic novel become transformed in *Jane Eyre* through economic instability.

The proposal that leads to the tantalizing possibility of the marriage plot, itself is strange and unlike any other proposal, Rochester begins by telling her that he is getting married and she must leave her position as governess at once. When Jane declares that she is saddened but ready to move on and will be going to Ireland Rochester begins to exclaim and confess his love. He says, "I sometimes have a queer feeling with regard to you- especially when you are near me, as now: it is as if I had a string somewhere under my left ribs, tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar string situated in the corresponding quarter of your little frame"(16). The notion of entrapment is foremost in a reader's mind when analyzing this quotation. Rochester's initial perception of Jane as "queer" reveals some sort of initial rejection to his fondness. Rochester had only admitted his longing when Jane stated that she was ready to move on. An oddness of emotion and longing is being revealed. Rochester sets Jane up to believe that he had been longing for her this whole time. Instead, this idea of longing to own Jane allows for Rochester then to admit all of his feelings. He is not overwhelmed by emotion, but by the thought of Jane going on and living a life without him. Rochester's speech also gathers significance from a biblical understanding, the figure of the ribs is a marker of this. God had made Eve from Adam's rib. The patriarchal nature of this biblical reference is that of women being created *for* man. Therefore, by Rochester referring to Jane as such, creates the idea that her existence is purely for his use. Rochester uses language to manipulate Jane's understanding such that she considers his

love in a more potent view when it is a direct version of the dominating nature of marriage during the nineteenth century. By making these references during the proposal, the novel insinuates these patriarchal practices that are enforced within the marriage. Therefore, the Gothic narrative of entrapment and its connection to this marriage plot is demonstrated within the symbol of the rib.

This unconventional proposal is followed by a horrific wedding scene in which Bertha's legal marriage to Rochester is announced. With this event, just as with every other intense and emotional event, elemental nature signs predict and proceed the event. When the proposal occurs it is, "a splendid Midsummer... The sweetest hour of twenty four... Sweetbriar and southernwood, jasmine, pink, and rose have long been yielding their evening sacrifice of incense" (11). These scenes of visionary imagination engage many different senses: the senses of smell, sight, and feeling all work strongly within the passage. After the marriage fails, the exact opposite weather occurs which I had discussed in the earlier quotation. The failed marriage results in an unruly December storm in the month of June. This unconventional proposal and marriage imply the strict narrative arch of the "governess genre." Just as in typical "governess novels," Jane is not able to legally marry the man who hires her and is instead faced with the debilitating prospect of being engaged in a sordid relationship with him. As discussed earlier, the close connection of narrator Jane and character Jane heavily influence the language within the novel. This close connection reveals an essential theme of the impact of the collision of the governess novel along with the Gothic novel.

The theme of the governess novel within *Jane Eyre* has three limiting factors that contribute to the Gothic mode of entrapment. The first is the middle-class placement of the governess and the few job opportunities. The second is the household, where governesses are not

homeless but do not have their own home. The final limiting factor is the distinction between the social life of the private and public sphere. First, the most economically substantial limitation is the existence of few available career paths. The substantial economic limitation was due to the increase of unmarried women. Pauline Simonson discusses the notion of the “redundant woman” and how it caused many problems for middle-class women in British society. In 1861 there was a “surplus” of around 400,000 women.¹ This was a result of the Crimean War during which many eligible men died. Women who were not married had essentially three options if they were middle class. These included: becoming a governess, a missionary, or a prostitute. These options were clearly limiting and lacked true choice. Other growing concerns for the Victorian middle-class women emerged as well. Mary Poovey argues that there was an increase in poverty as well as a decrease in job opportunities as the idea of women’s roles and the female norm began to shift. While the availability within the field was shrinking the interest in it began to rise due to the independence and education. This interest then limited and rationed the amount of job opportunities available which effects the governesses’ position because the field becomes much more competitive. Although there were many negative associations with being governess, its disconnection to patriarchal restraints makes an interesting and more positive shift. According to Poovey, the Governess represented two things, “the figure who epitomized the domestic ideal, and the figure who threatened to destroy it” (Poovey, 127). The central idea in this claim is that the governess both followed the societal rules of women by abiding to the idea that women should be within the domestic space and practice such rituals as homemaking, but also tear down the expectation by making their own income and teaching. This creates a lot of tension because governesses are following the rules of society by not entering the “public life” while also leaving

¹ Simonsen, Pauline. “Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Redundant Women.” *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 35, no. 4, 1997, pp. 509–532. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40002265. Accessed 25 Apr. 2020.

home and becoming financially independent. While alternatively destroying the desire of the patriarchy by living and supporting oneself, the governess also simultaneously has a freedom to go where she wants. Within *Jane Eyre*, this gives Jane much more freedom. Although she is stuck within this liminal zone of the middle class and is 'forced' to support herself she has the freedom to move out her natal home. When Jane is told by Rochester that he is married, she can leave him because she is financially independent. Therefore, Jane is in this liminal economic mode in which she can escape but this comes with risk such as not finding a new job. Essentially, I am stating that both Brontë and Jane have a connection to this limitation. Where Brontë is attempting to fundamentally create a realistic narrative of a governess attempting to grapple with the constraints of patriarchal society. I am not stating that Brontë has a similar struggle to Jane but that her understanding of patriarchal society and connection to the redundant women creates a more intense representation of the mode of entrapment within the novel. Jane's ability to leave the relationship with Rochester is just that, an ability. But because of the social limitations and the marriage plot, Jane the character is ultimately married to Rochester. I insist that this entrapment is due to the narrative arch of the plot as well as the economic limitations. At the end of the novel, before the marriage Jane does not view herself as worthy of Rochester's love, "Then he stretched his hand out to be led. I took that dear hand, held it a moment to my lips, then let it pass round my shoulder: being so much of a lower stature than he, I served both for his prop and guide" (278). This example provides both Jane's understanding of her own status as well as her opportunity to become more than her middle-class limitation. Jane the narrator does not express much happiness or sympathy but simply knowledge of her position as caretaker. The next sentence in the novel is the iconic "Reader, I married him" (279) and this apex of the novel could not be any more pale. Through Jane's syntax and the lack of her excitement I point to my

argument that by becoming married to Rochester, Jane will no longer be a 'redundant woman.' Jane will now be a woman with more money and stature. Therefore, the narrative arch of the story and the combination of syntax lead to my understanding of this marriage as entrapment instead of the classic happy ending.

The second liminal space which the governess occupied relies within the household; she is neither rich nor poor. The Governess is of higher social rank than many of the maids, butlers, and housekeepers because of her high intellect and education. She is, however, not of high enough social rank or economic power to be fully supported by her family. The career of a governess was often viewed as a 'final resort' according to Gilbert (460). This is due to the limited options of her career path. On account of her financial position the governess had an odd liminal position not just in the household in which she worked but also within the economy itself with much distaste from the middle-class Victorian era due to their rising number. Soon, becoming a Governess could be a way in which poor girls could exceed the expectation of their social class. Some would crawl out of poverty with the leverage of education and become governesses. This then shrank the need and pay of governesses who were of the middle class. This distinction between household economics and the whole economic market creates a division in which the governess is subject to struggle. Brontë is using the theme of entrapment within the Gothic novel and translating this to the governess novel to demonstrate the limited economic value of the governess. Brontë demonstrates that these classic themes of entrapment can be adopted to other forms of patriarchal use. What I mean here is that she is demonstrating that in the Gothic novel, the physical entrapment is an extended metaphor for the cultural limitations that women faced and continue to face.

The third liminal space is within the public and private sphere. This is a traditional social formation in which the private sphere is domestic and is inhabited by women who are expected to stay at home and formulate the utopian household. This space was to provide comfort, warmth and care for the children as well as the father returning from work. Working women in these domestic spaces engaged in cooking, cleaning, millinery, and reading. The public space provided for men was the workforce. This allowed men to go into the harsh, dangerous conditions of outdoor and public life. This division then created depictions of the public and the private as alternate universes in which the men were allowed access to the private, but women were not permitted within the public sphere. Many women engaged in letter writing and often governesses engaged in book, prose and poetry writing. This was somewhat of an acceptable application to the public domain. I mention 'somewhat' because many women authors released their novels with an alias, so not to cause a public response. When Charlotte Brontë engages in letters to the Poet Laureate Robert Southey asking if her writing was good, he responded, "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life: & it ought not to be. The more she is engaged to her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it" (Gilbert, 477). This clear discrepancy of the permeation of the man's world is quite apparent. Although, Brontë went against his suggestion and became a successful writer, the accessibility was limited. The representation of this limitation that women faced is clarified using an important figure of Southey. Southey was an influential male figure during the nineteenth century who held many of these patriarchal insights. This example clearly lays out this dominant cultural mindset against women who ventured outside their social limitations. This limitation then also influenced the narrator. In the novel, Jane comments on man's dismissiveness and the way in which they often dismiss women. In the novel both Jane and Bertha seems to have their own aversion to men's power and the patriarchy.

It is possible that Brontë's response to this power is the patriarchal subversion of the injured Rochester at the end of the novel. This depiction of the injured Rochester, I suggest demonstrates a sort of feminist revenge. This means that Brontë cannot cast her characters of Bertha and Jane as rebellious figures who conquer this oppression, but the novel demonstrates the aversion to such. Brontë's ending to the novel is realistic in the terms of nineteenth century Britain. What I mean is that both feminist figures perish, Bertha through self-immolation and Jane through admission to a life as a caretaker. Jane's final position is revealed in the quotation I demonstrated earlier, "I served as his prop and guide" (278). Although Jane marries him, his disability subverts her to the role of caretaker or 'servant': serving as his eyes and guide. Although there is this loss taken by the women in the novel, the revenge to Rochester's patriarchal power is the narrative decision to remove his sight and arm. My argument is that the novel *Jane Eyre* suggests a rebellion through the disabling of Rochester. This argument is much different from Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar who suggest that the rebellion lies within Bertha. I suggest that Brontë's personal connection to the novel demonstrates the reality of the nineteenth century where the only option for women were to participate in caretaking or die. Through the characters of Jane and Bertha both outcomes are demonstrated. Although this seems like a dramatic conclusion to the novels end, it connects both the reality of Brontë's time as well as superimposes the novel arch to form a rebellious work of art that breaks barriers but does not put an end to them.

Chapter II

The Erasure of Bertha Mason

There has been a lot of strong academic argument surrounding Bertha Mason as a character. Some scholars believe she is the embodiment of rebellion, while others argue about Bertha's silencing and erasure. Elizabeth Donaldson's essay titled "The Corpus of the Madwoman: Toward a Feminist Disability Studies Theory of Embodiment and Mental Illness," argues against Gilbert and Gubar's analysis in their book *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Gilbert and Gubar's analysis is based on Second Wave Feminism and the belief that madness is manifested in relation to rebellion. This is applicable to Gilbert and Gubar's position on second wave feminism because women writing during the nineteenth century were often writing for other women using madness in their female characters as a peg for rebellion against the tyrannical patriarchy of their time. In the Second Wave Feminist view, Gilbert and Gubar read madness metaphorically. They also caution that one should avoid the romanticization of madness but because of its idealistic connection this seems relatively impossible. For the purposes of this essay, I insist on separating madness from mental illness, viewing madness as the romanticized alternative due to the implication of rebellion and the latter as more of a pure medical term. I will read madness as a literal disease/illness that is used as a way of trapping and disabling women in the nineteenth century. Although the opinions of Donaldson and Gilbert and Gubar have a strong correlation when discussing the novels versus science, this distinction between madness as a disease instead of a metaphoric act of rebellion becomes critical. Donaldson states that it is essential to understand Bertha Mason as an important silenced character within *Jane Eyre*. Donaldson discards the view of madness as a metaphor and uses psychology and insights into disability studies to support her claim that allow an alternate feminist view. The difference

between Second Wave Feminism and Donaldson's insights in Feminism and disability studies is that Donaldson prefers a much more sympathetic view of all of the characters. Instead of viewing Bertha as a staple and figure of rebellion she instead expands on Rochester's disability as well as Bertha's and the effect of their mental state instead of the social state. In the essay she states that, "This alternative view restores the novel's original emphasis on the physical basis of mental illness, and in doing so seeks to complicate current constructions within feminist theory" (102). This statement means that we should pay due attention to the emphasis on physical characteristics of her illness, such as Bertha's fits of rage, biting, arson, vandalism and stabbing. Donaldson, however, does not begin to touch on the way the novel presents the physical characteristics of Bertha's madness which include "a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane" (70). This quotation also proves the point that the women who broke the normative female ideal were culturally regarded as vile. In this essay I will read madness as a literal disease or illness, but I will also direct attention to the way in which this diagnosis was used as a mechanism for entrapping and disabling women. In several cases, madness was used as a medical excuse rather than an actual illness. The importance of seeing madness and illness as a medical term rather than a symbol is it demonstrates the accumulation of events that occur when hospitalizing a woman. If we are to view Bertha entirely as a symbol this erases a larger problem within the mental health industry that relies on the hospitalization of women who had been exiled by their family members. I am not at all arguing that Bertha is or is not mad, but I am examining the effect to which is madness can be seen within the novel and the narrative as physical as well as mental entrapment. Though Bertha was not hospitalized, locking her away in an attic could produce similar psychological damage. It is also important to note that the narrative mode that gives Jane the character a voice, simultaneously silences Bertha. Because of

the connection that Jane the narrator holds over the narrative arch of the novel, this gives her power through language.

In this essay I will be dividing my argument about entrapment into three different perspectives. The first kind of entrapment that I will consider is physical entrapment. This is how Bertha is literally trapped within Thornfield Hall. By contrasting Bertha's physical entrapment with historical perspectives of women within the asylums we can begin to analyze the treatment of Bertha more thoroughly. The second perspective is the idea of mental entrapment. This is present in much of the psychological and historical approach I will take. In the case of the historical images of mad women, there is a huge shift within the national consciousness that connects femininity and madness. I will explore this connection. Finally, the last form of entrapment that I will consider is within the narrative which insistently places Bertha as the hindrance that has to be overcome. By examining the few passages we get within the novel to describe Bertha, readers can recognize through rhetoric the perspective of Bertha that is silenced. This perspective comes mostly from Rochester and Jane and determines the extent of silencing that occurs within the novel. These three levels will help us to distinguish just how silenced Bertha is within the novel and explore the criteria for recovering her from the limited narrative mode. All of these concepts seem to bleed into one another. All of these types of entrapment become one and are critical to exposing the British national consciousness that propagated and thrived through patriarchal means as well as the hegemonic imperialist agenda.

To begin with the first level of entrapment, we expose the physical characteristics of Bertha's entrapment and demonstrate how Rochester's perspective reflects that of not only a patriarchal figure but an imperialist one. The book *Women of the Asylum* by Jeffrey Geller and Maxine Harris gives evidence of women's internal and external struggle throughout the

nineteenth and twentieth century. For the purposes of this essay I will focus on the nineteenth century and the beliefs that women had. Not only did women recount their traumas of the asylum but they also spoke of their personal beliefs of why they were put there and their ideological values that are essential to the argument that women were entrapped for many things other than madness. The primary account in this book that I would like to focus on is the sections of *Wives and Husbands*. This directly relates to Bertha and Rochester. The entry of Tirzah F. Shedd (1865) is a prime example of a husband's control of his wife's endeavors. In this article, Shedd explains that she had been "charged" (79) for "spiritualism" entirely by her husband. This spiritualism is not described by Shedd or spoken about in further detail but is presumably something outside the Christian faith. Despite her protests at the court stating that she was sane and did not want to be taken from her children, they took the husband's side. This is an exercise of control, where she had been proven to be completely sane but her practice of speaking to the dead is what condemned her to the asylum. This is the result of patriarchal control and although she attempted to exercise her right to religious freedom because of male dominance this attempt backfired. Writing her story, Shedd states, "It may be a land of freedom for the men, but I am sure it is not for the married women" (80). This is one of her more prolific ideas. Shedd is aware of the control exercised over her as well as the powerful status of men. This is why she continued to write about her story, to hope that it would reach the right people and the hospitals would get shut down or the treatments for the patients would be less tortuous. The patriarchal nature of the hospital, however, continued and the doctors made comments to Shedd such as "If you were my wife, I should want you at home" (82). In the text Shedd demonstrates her disgust for the men who trapped her and put her in the hospital as well as the doctor who worked to keep her there knowing she was not ill. The only thing Shedd had asked for from the doctor was that "[he] give

up that position which [he] confessed to [her] that [he was] sick of five years ago, and release those women you hold here as prisoners, under the will of cruel husbands, and others who call themselves friends” (81). This statement is noteworthy of women that were sane and aware of the society which they were engaging with. If someone is ‘insane’ or ill, they are not acutely aware of these social institutions and certainly not in such a detailed way. This awareness closely translates to Bertha’s appearance in the novel, although Bertha is not as intellectually aware as Shedd through her actions, her distrust of men and caretaking is clear through physical action. Instances where Bertha presents consciousness, her distaste for men’s authority and control is apparent. Bertha physically attacks in attempt to kill only Rochester and her brother Mr. Mason. This is an indication of both Bertha’s ability to understand her physical environment as well as her emotional expression. Bertha also encounters Jane in a physical sense, but this interaction does not precipitate into violence as the others do.

The story of Shedd connects distinctly to Bertha. Similarly, to that of Shedd, the state of Bertha’s illness is at question before she is locked away. It is not clear whether or not she is ill when Rochester locks her in the attic. While she may have been ill, it is also true that the reader can identify through Rochester’s tone and syntax in the novel his spiteful remarks. The way Rochester refers to the historical illness within her family presents problematic evidence. In the novel he states:

Bertha Mason is mad; and she came from a mad family; -idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was both a mad woman and a drunkard! -as I found out after I had wed the daughter: for they were silent on the family secrets before. Bertha, like a dutiful child, copied her parents on both points. (Brontë 69)

The problem that this statement reveals is the historical nature of the illness and how it is passed down through the family. Here, the novel blames Bertha for her own illness. By giving examples of her mother's illness and how it is connected to the abuse of alcohol relies on the idea that illness is based on decisions and familial history. By stating that Bertha is a "dutiful child" and "copied" her parents by having this illness, Rochester blames her. Because Rochester places the blame on Bertha there is a lack of understanding of illness as well as a lack of sympathy. Then, instead of describing the progress of Bertha's illness or the accumulation of her symptom's Rochester states, "my experience was heavenly, if you only knew it! But I owe no further explanation" (69). This quotation insists on the idea that his marriage with Bertha went from heavenly to describing her as a "defrauded wretch" and a "bad, mad and embruted partner" (69). This shift eliminates how Bertha became ill. Although it is true that addiction and mental illness can give genetic determination, the blame placed on Bertha by Rochester creates an unsympathetic point of view. By then skipping to her present symptoms and denying and silencing her story of the progression of illness, the reader is denied a sympathy for Bertha. Therefore, Rochester's ability to describe his own experiences places him as the major patriarchal figure within the novel. We are only allowed to hear the experiences of himself and Jane. This advantage of narration is derived from his patriarchal placement and his mindset is acquired from the British national consciousness of imperialism. The textualization of Rochester in the place of an imperialist patriarch puts Bertha at a disadvantage in two very different ways. The first is that she is a woman, subject to the abuses of the patriarchy much like Shedd. The second is being a Jamaican creole immigrant within Europe makes her subject to a permeating imperial paradigm that exists within the narrative as well as the characters psyche. Alexandra Nygren states in her article titled "Disabled and Colonized: Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*" this

essential imperial distinguishing factor. Nygren places Bertha as a “colonized body brought to England by her husband” (118). Therefore, it is not solely Bertha’s womanhood but this combination with her ethnicity that subjects her to a life in the attic. I am not here arguing whether or not Bertha Mason was mad or mentally ill but rather emphasizing the relationship of the colonizer and the colonized. This brings us to the question: if Bertha is or is not mad, how is the text utilizing Rochester as a colonial figure? Nygren’s essay gives a clear cut example of Rochester’s point of view and how he distinguishes a difference between Jane and Bertha. Nygren quotes from the novel, “[Rochester] would receive [Jane] in an embrace at least as fond as it would be restrictive. I should not shrink with disgust as I did from [Bertha] her” (257). The character of Rochester within the texts seems to perpetuate the ideas of the British national consciousness. In the text, we can see that his authoritative position as husband to Bertha allows for her entrapment. Although due to British law, Rochester would have this power over both Jane and Bertha due to the legalities of marriage, Rochester’s colonial mindset creates a difference between Bertha and Jane. If Bertha had not been placed in a position of “otherness” or immigrant status; perhaps if she were European, Rochester would not ‘shrink away in disgust.’ In the same conversation with Jane, Rochester explains the ‘intellectual’ difference between him and Bertha. Rochester believed Bertha’s, “cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher” (261). Essentially these ideas of Bertha came from the historical relevance of the civilizing mission within Europe. The civilizing mission that permeated nineteenth century Europe was that of ‘teaching’ those who did not have a European education and he found Bertha incapable of thought or instruction.

Therefore, we have to acknowledge Imperialism in its relevant nineteenth century texts and how characters might perpetuate these long-lasting British ideologies. Gayatri Chakravorty

Spivak states that the text does not define Bertha as human but “the native ‘subject’ [who] is not almost an animal but rather the object of what might be termed the terrorism of the categorical imperative” (248). This means that Bertha is an unconditional moral obligation in the novel.

Spivak places Bertha not as a sentimental character but one whose motive within the novel is to be in the novel. This argument then counters Gilbert and Gubar’s claim of Bertha being a figure of rebellion. This argument also counters Donaldson’s perception of Bertha’s mental illness as sympathetic. My argument remains that the existence of Bertha Mason or rather her silencing within the novel forces the reader to question this silencing. Bertha may be a character that is relevant to completing the marriage plot, but this does not discount her impact on the reader. Bertha Mason is the distinct driving figure of the plot of *Jane Eyre*.

Furthermore, the rhetoric of Rochester continues to generate Jane as the savior and Bertha as the ‘other.’ Within the texts Rochester explains to Jane:

Concealing the mad-woman’s neighbourhood, from you, however, was something like covering a child with a cloak, and laying it down near a upas-tree: that demon’s vicinage is poisoned, and always was. But I’ll shut up Thornfield Hall: I’ll nail up the front door, and board the lower windows; I’ll give Mrs Poole two hundred a year to live with my wife, as you term that fearful hag. (Brontë 80-81)

The metaphoric comparison of the child and the tree attempts to box both women into clear distinctions of good and evil. For the child with a cloak is meant to be Jane, and the poisonous tree is meant to be Bertha. The symbol of the child embodies the youthful and innocence of Jane as well as her blindness to her environment. The upas tree, however, is a European myth of a tree

in Southeast Asia that emits poison into the air and kills anything in its surrounding area.² Therefore, the placement of a European myth is clearly rooted in orientalism and the vision Europeans invented of the East. By comparing Bertha to this European myth, it exposes the rhetorical colonial other that the text suggests. The quotation not only displays the “other-ing” of Bertha but her ability to infect those around her without language. The quotation suggests Bertha’s ability to destabilize and even kill those in her surroundings by her existence. Spivak discusses this in her article “Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,” where European colonizers through literary narrative created the idea of the ‘Third World’ and drew the line between who was an educated people and who was not. Brontë’s novel is continuing this tradition of literary narrative by manipulating Bertha’s lack of language as a template for this otherness.

The second half of the quotation determines the way Rochester would solve of this ‘problem.’ The problem being Bertha interrupting his marriage and how he plans to combat it. This is to run away, but not without completely locking up his “demon,” his “fearful hag.” Therefore, by wanting to nail the door and board the windows and shut up not only Bertha but Grace as well as her son, demonstrate the extremity Rochester’s character will go to, to discard Bertha within the novel. This contrasts to the ‘fond embrace’ he would give Jane if she was mad or ill. The character of Rochester relates to many of the men who hold this kind of power over their wives during the nineteenth century. Shedd states “When will married women be safe from her husband’s power?” (84). This is exactly relevant to Bertha. Although most women in the stories seem to be relatively sane, who is to say that Bertha is not? Although she is personified

² Tim Hannigan, “Beyond control: Orientalist tensions and the history of the “upas tree” myth”, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Sage Journals. January 29, 2018. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0021989418754345>

as a beast, with lack of speech and continuous laughter as well as violent action, how are we to believe that this imprisonment did not create that condition? According to Nygren, the physical entrapment of Bertha is due to the “Anglican colonialist patriarchal values construct[ing] Bertha as disabled because she is the colonial Other, and the ableist hegemony erases Bertha’s personhood” (119). Therefore, exclusion of Bertha’s speech is imperative to understanding that the physical entrapment of Bertha was determined narratively through this colonial perspective. The placement of power within the novel is distributed among characters with speech. Quite simply, Jane has speech and the power to tell the story while Bertha is denied both. Bertha is not an act of rebellion like Gilbert and Gubar write, but academics like Spivak and Nygren give power to Bertha by exposing the imperialist idealism and thus creating a rebellion or revolution of thought. This can be contrasted with Jane as a character and how she is given the privilege of narrating her own story. Within the novel, Jane the narrator composes and deliberately demonstrates the power she holds with language. Further, Bertha is silenced from language entirely but also denied access to telling her own perspective.

I want to now shift to the psychological entrapment that Bertha faces. Here I will expand on Donaldson’s argument that psychology unfairly pathologizes women. Donaldson argues that much of the psychological knowledge examined within *Jane Eyre* is based on physiognomy. Here it essential to recognize exactly how psychology came to view women in a skewed manner from other psychological perspectives outside of the works of physiognomy. A brief history of the representation of women within psychology is necessary. Beginning 40 years pre-Brontë, around 1800, the famous French revolutionary figure Théroigne de Méricourt was examined by influential psychiatrist Philippe Pinel and his work partner Etienne Esquirol (see figure 1). Both psychiatrists heavily believed in diagnoses upon appearance. Much like physiognomy, Pinel ad

Esquirol believed in “display culture.” Jane Kromm’s book *The Art of Frenzy*, defines display culture as the “unacknowledged use of previous iconographies in which both past sources and artistic production were purposely obscured” (Kromm, 2008). This means that these psychiatrists used previous works of art and icons like de Méricourt to determine their mental illness. Kromm refers to this as display culture because it is the artistic representation of one person and not the actual image of a patient. Viewing these works of art as natural images of the ill, alters the perception of illness. The difference between physiognomy, the study of the face; and display culture, the study of the subject is illuminated. One cannot accurately diagnose along the premise of art, because it is art. Therefore, for the French revolutionary de Méricourt became this status of the insane women, relating women in politics to illness. After this we begin to see a shift in this display culture. It began as using works of art to codify and label historical figures as ill to then creating works of art, exaggerating features of the mentally ill and categorize this as an accurate representation of illness. This shift not only had detrimental effects on psychological diagnoses but effected a disproportionate number of women. Kromm argues that during this shift “most of the cases depicted are women, and they also dominate the most disordered cohorts, holding the majority of among idiots and the demented, and monopolizing the category of mania” (231). What this means is not only were most cases of the mentally ill women, but they also had the highest number of cases in mania (hysteria) and intellectual disability.



Figure 1

Jane Eyre was written between the transitional period Elaine Showalter's book, *The Female Malady*, refers to as the "Lunacy Reform Movement" (8). I argue that the novel is to be placed in this transitional period between madness and hysteria. Therefore, the revolutionary figure of the ill woman who was once seen as an 'animal' becomes transformed into 'demonic woman.' By using England's historical perspective of illness, it can help to piece together the perspective of the novel. England always had a history of documented illness and the most

famous Bethlem (Bedlam) Royal Hospital was at the forefront of this (Figure 2).



Figure 2

Showalter describes the hospital as “the symbol of all madhouses, holding the imaginative place in the history of asylums that the Bastille holds in the history of prisons” (7). The shift of viewing women as prominently mentally ill where in the course of the eighteenth century “the appealing madwoman gradually displaced the repulsive madman” (8). Therefore, within *Jane Eyre* the language that describes Bertha as animalistic and the novel’s classification of her as a demon seem to become blended. This transition between the primary figure of madness being a man who is a repulsive brute to the “victimized madwoman became an almost cult figure for the Romantics” (Showalter, 10).



Figure 3

My argument is that the representation of Bertha Mason within the novel was a grotesque combination of this blending tradition in England that perpetuates the idea that madness was masculine and is transformed into feminine madness. The Romantic era of literature poses three different types of madwoman which Showalter argues is “the suicidal Ophelia, the sentimental Crazy Jane, and the violent Lucia” (10). All of these figures display elements of Bertha’s madness. The suicidal Ophelia demonstrates Bertha’s self-immolation at the end of the novel. The sentimental crazy Jane displays Bertha’s mourning for her lost lover or the rejection of Rochester. Finally, the violent Lucia displays Bertha’s violent tendencies which I will be focusing most on later in the paper.

Post Brontë’s novel, the depiction of hysteria (earlier known as mania) was exaggerated in “The Mysteries of Hysteria” by J Bogousslavsky. This article is a historical analysis of Jean Charcot’s studies and findings of Hysteria which contain drawings by Paul Richer. These images were used for diagnoses in which “Charcot claimed that Richer’s drawings were accurate enough for a doctor to diagnose the illnesses depicted” (Péricles Maranhão-Filho1).

Figure 3 is an image of a woman tearing her clothes with her eyes rolled back in her head, a pointed tongue, and wild hair. This image can easily be compared to Bertha and the way that she is portrayed within the book, “a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back. I know not what dress she had on: it was white and straight; but whether gown, sheet, or shroud, I cannot tell” (57) and “the lips swelled and dark; the brow furrowed; the black eyebrows widely raised over the blood-shot eyes” (58) these descriptions correlate irrevocably. Within the Figure 3, what most stuck out to me aside from this over exaggerated possessed figure was the tearing of the clothes. Not only were the clothes torn to express this form of female violence but there is a particular sexualization having the breast or ‘bosom’ exposed. Figure 1 of de Méricourt resembles this similar pattern of women who were often portrayed with their breasts exposed. If we are to look through the art historical perspective of illness, Jane Kromm in her book titled *The Art of Frenzy* evaluates the uses of the exposed bosom in art “the gesture, [is] mimicking a possessed, Rubensian demoniac” (261). Kromm also explains, “symptoms of demonic possession were those of hysteria because contemporary hysterics adopted the same poses” (265). The art historical perspective of the sexualization of mentally ill women is clear within the image and within the description of Bertha as well. The reference to Bertha’s clothes creates a similar image to the figure 3. Jane’s reference to Bertha’s “gown, sheet or shroud” mimics the clothing of those in the mental asylum. A gown is something a ‘normal’ person would wear, this is exemplary of average attire. The language then moves toward a more negative connotation of a ‘sheet’ where Bertha might more resemble to torn disheveled clothing of the asylum like in figure 3. The shroud is an over exaggeration much like the images of the mentally ill that we see. The shroud is a reference to the thing someone covers a dead body with. Here, the language within the novel hyperbolizes the image of Bertha into a

dark, demon-like figure much like how Charcot and Richer's images appear. This extenuates the idea that although Bertha was not stuck in a mental asylum her being locked up had a negative effect on her health. The use of the display culture in order to perpetuate and exacerbate an image was influential on the narrative of the novel. Although Charcot and Richer came after Brontë's novel, the depiction of mad women became ever increasingly inaccurate. Charcot's way of representing ill women, according to Kromm, is "a way of exercising visual skill through retrospective diagnosis and claimed to find evidence of hysterical symptoms brilliantly recorded but unrecognized in past works of art" (256). This means that Charcot and Richer's believed that their collaboration exploited works of art of demonic possession in past art to be actual representations of illness. The process of claiming works of art as psychological encounters of the past skews the perception of mental illness entirely. The exploitation of the "display culture" and Charcot's contribution to it may have influenced Brontë's representation of Bertha. Although Charcot came well after these ideas permeated British society throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, perhaps Brontë's experience with these works of art and how women were demonstrated in psychology conditioned the way the narrative referred to Bertha.

The final level of entrapment that Bertha Mason is exposed to is the narrative. Within the novel Bertha is completely silenced and neglected. I want to begin speaking of the narrative perspective of the novel before touching on the censored figure of Bertha. So far, I have given evidence as to how Bertha is entrapped within the constraints of her physical environment and the effect to which this is used to exploit the colonial perspective. Then, I have demonstrated the mental constraints of the history of psychology and visual culture to prove the influence society has on Bertha. Now I want to speak of how the novel silences Bertha and works to erase her

perspective through dialogue. In the novel, Bertha is silenced and not granted a voice. It is through her actions that we can see her pain and abandonment. Within the narrative given to the reader, there are three distinct instances in which Bertha makes her presence known and commits some sort of 'vengeful' act. Two of the three attacks that she had committed were violent and both of them were directed at men. The first in the series of three is when she lit Rochester's bed on fire as he was sleeping. This act could be considered her response to Rochester bringing a governess, Jane to the estate. There are several things within this event that seem to be strange aside from Bertha. This initial attack occurs soon after Jane's arrival and directed only at Rochester. Bertha's anger could be from the entrapment alone or from the known presence of Jane. After the attack happens, Jane puts the fire out with water, Rochester accuses her of being a witch or practicing sorcery. This is striking because it is the initial reaction to having his life saved is to blame. Rochester then uses this near-death event in order to become closer to Jane. Rochester refers to her as "My cherished preserver" (194). This section is early in Jane's arrival to Thornfield Hall and is clearly used as a foreshadowing to the reader. Bertha's silence is reflected in her laugh, "a demoniac laugh-- low, suppressed, and deep" (190). This is the only language that we receive from Bertha and it is through the perspective of Jane's fear. This description demonizes Bertha as we view her as a low-voiced creature. This typifies a lack of innocence and denies her femininity. The essential point of her setting the bed on fire is to clearly threaten if not kill Rochester but it also foreshadows the ending of the story and the familiarity with arson.

The second attack in the series of three is even more violent, when Bertha stabs and bites her brother. This was in the beginning of the novel when the reader is not clear of who she is and this is now the second attack leading anyone to believe that they are not safe from this

mysterious threat. This attack was similar to the first as it was preceded by laughter, and then continues. Jane is left with Mr. Mason while Rochester retrieves help, during this interval she hears through the door the ‘murderer’ who makes the sounds of “a step creak, a momentary renewal of the snarling, canine noise, and a deep human groan” (272). This makes Jane question everything, about what kind of beast may lay behind that door. From this interaction we now hear more from Bertha but everything we hear is inarticulate noise instead of a human being. The limitation of language creates a very inhuman perspective. By such means, the narrative creates Bertha into this animal-like humanoid figure and it is easier for the characters and readers to remove themselves from sympathy for Bertha. A view of the mentally ill as animals and inhuman allowed, for the unbearable treatment that they encountered within the asylums and within their own homes. It is conceivable that Bertha acts in anger and vengeance against her brother, though she cannot express it through language. Although Mr. Mason thinks that it is wrong for Rochester to re-marry, he seems to remain quiet about the treatment of his incarcerated sister. His silence makes the point that it is unacceptable to defy the laws of God and church by remarrying, but actual human morals do not matter.

The third and ‘final’ act of revenge that Bertha seeks is against Jane. This is the only act of hers that is non-violent. Within this section Bertha stands in the corner of the room with a candle and frightens Jane awake, Bertha then purposely scares her by standing there and staring. Bertha then takes Jane’s veil and wears it and observes herself in the mirror, then she rips the veil in half and throws it on the floor. Bertha then gets close to Jane’s face and huffs the candle out. This event also contains no language, Bertha does not laugh, cry, howl, bark or any of the sorts of noises they claim to hear from here. Furthermore, this act of revenge is clear although no language is used. The veil is a symbol of marriage between Rochester and Jane, because Bertha

puts it on and then rips it in half. Bertha is saying, albeit wordlessly, that she is married to Rochester and Jane will not be. The fact that there was no violence demonstrates Bertha's boundaries and human understanding. With this section Bertha does not blame Jane for the marriage but simply tells her that it cannot be. The lack of violence demonstrates the consideration she has for Jane, and that her frustration is not directed to her. Finally, we can see that although Bertha is transfigured into this animalistic and illiterate creature through her actions, we can understand her thoughts. Instead of dehumanizing Bertha we can become sympathetic to her struggle and understand her. The novel *Jane Eyre* examines the way Bertha's exclusion from the narrative creates not only mystery but a looming sense of danger due to this erasure of language. This results in the British national consciousness and perpetuates the idea that one who does not speak English or is educated to the English standard is equal to an inhumane, animalistic figure.

CONCLUSION

In the novel *Jane Eyre*, Jane the character is given a voice through her narrator. Her limitations within the novel, however, are restricted due to the demanding structure of the Gothic novel combined with the marriage plot. Jane's deposition as a caretaker for Rochester and his married partner does not compare to the injustices that Bertha Mason endures. Bertha is denied a voice, a perspective and language. Bertha is viewed as an inhuman figure that becomes distorted through the lack of emergence through the narrative. Brontë effectively casts Bertha from this narrative mode and further perpetuates the themes of this Gothic novel. Finally, it is the impact of both the patriarchal and imperialist ideas that entrap and limit both Bertha and Jane. The cultural mindset of nineteenth century Britain permeates the mind of Brontë in both figures of Jane and Bertha. The act of dismantling and injuring Rochester presents the rebellious nature of Brontë's narrative attacking the influences of the patriarchy on these characters. Within the boundaries of British society, the novel is an accurate representation of the limitations of women in general and especially non-European women. Further, I would like to state that *Jane Eyre* as a novel is an act of the rebellion for the European woman. This rebellion is influenced through revenge. But the impact of who is narrating is ultimately the one who is granted voice. Ultimately both women are subject to entrapment, but Bertha is the one who suffers and dies for her freedom. Therefore, the narrative allows Brontë to imaginatively dismantle the patriarchy but stay within the confines of what is appropriate for nineteenth century Britain. Therefore, this narrative silencing discards Bertha as a character and alienates her due to British colonial perspective. The double entrapment that can be observed in *Jane Eyre* emulates the boundaries of both British society and the limitations of the narrative.

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Image Sources

Figure 1 Charles Devritz, "Théroigne de Méricourt", 1845.

Figure 2 Caius Gabriel Cibber, "Raving and Melancholy Madness", 1677

Figure 3 Paul Richer, "Attaque Démoniaque", 1885.